

PRESS RELEASE

CARIF Celebrates 10 Years of Innovative Cancer Research in Malaysia Tun Mahathir Launches “HOPE LIVES HERE”

KUALA LUMPUR, [21 JUNE 2012] – Cancer Research Initiatives Foundation (CARIF) marked a milestone in Malaysian history as it celebrated a decade of excellence in innovative cancer research today.

Y.A.Bhg. Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, who launched CARIF ten years ago, was present to commemorate the 10th anniversary celebration together with the organization’s board of trustees including YM Tunku Tan Sri Dato’ Seri Ahmad Yahaya, who serves as Chairman, Y.A.Bhg. Toh Puan Dato’ Seri Dr Aishah Ong, YTM Tengku Datuk Seri Ahmad Shah Al-Haj ibni Almarhum Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Al-Haj, Madam Lim Siew Lian, Mr Abdul Hamid Ibrahim and Mr Alan Hamzah Sendut.

Speaking at the event, Professor Dr Teo Soo-Hwang, Chief Executive Officer of CARIF said, “Cancer is a leading cause of death worldwide, accounting for 7.6 million deaths in 2008 and it is projected to increase to 13.1 million in 2030. Approximately 30,000 Malaysians are diagnosed with cancer each year and that number is increasing rapidly. CARIF was established in 2002 to conduct research so that more Malaysians can survive cancer. We believe Hope Lives Here.”

“This year, CARIF commemorates its 10th year anniversary with a simple, yet powerful theme: “Hope Lives Here”. The theme encapsulates CARIF’s belief that the answer for cancer prevention and treatment lies in our very own population, in our very own genes, in our health habits and in Malaysia’s own biodiversity.”

“Research is vital to improving the understanding, management and treatment of cancer in Malaysia. CARIF is focused in establishing research programmes that combine the strengths of local researchers and local resources, with international collaborations in the USA, UK, Japan and Australia. We focus on how our Asian genes cause us to develop or respond differently to treatment compared to Caucasians. We focus on developing new targeted therapy with fewer side effects particularly for cancers more common in Asians, like oral and nasopharyngeal cancer. We are maximizing Malaysia’s rich biodiversity in search for anti-cancer compounds.”

“Research can make a difference in a patient’s life and it is the only way that we can find ways to fight back against the tide of cancer,” she added.

Beginning from a humble 700sf laboratory with six scientists, today, CARIF operates from state-of-the-art laboratories of 6,000 sq ft in Sime Darby Medical Centre housing a team of more than 40 scientists. Among some of the notable initiatives, achievements and breakthroughs that have emerged from the CARIF labs are as follows:

Genetics of Breast and Ovarian Cancer

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in Malaysia and the biggest problem is that we have an incomplete understanding of how the disease develops and so only 10% of breast cancer is preventable.

CARIF is finding genes that cause breast cancer and dissecting how these interact with our lifestyle to cause breast cancer. In collaboration with the University of Cambridge, the team uses this knowledge to help families survive and prevent breast and ovarian cancer. More than 1,500 Malaysian women have participated in the breast cancer genetic study and working with University Malaya, the unit is the only centre to offer complete genetic counseling and testing service. Knowing our genetic makeup helps doctors and researchers target screening and prevention to women who need it most. Knowing the genes also helps us to develop better treatments for these cancers.

CARIF is also actively promoting breast cancer screening and emphasizing that early detection saves lives. The biggest challenge is that breasts, genes and lifestyles of Asian women are different from that of Caucasian women but we do not use this to tailor screening for Asian women. Though the “More than a Mammo” programme, CARIF is using gene information, lifestyle information and mammograms to improve screening for breast cancer in Asian women. Since its launch in October 2011, more than 1,000 Malaysian women have participated in the programme, which also aims to raise awareness that early detection of breast cancer saves lives. Due to the overwhelming response, CARIF has recently launched the second phase of the programme and hopes to recruit up to 3,000 women for the programme by the end of this year.

CARIF has also developed the Patient Navigation Programme to improve the general understanding of cancer treatment options and surviving breast cancer. The programme consists of the Patient Decision Aid and the Patient Navigation Video which are used as tools to guide newly diagnosed patients through the maze of decisions and treatment options and to empower them to make their own treatment decisions.

Identifying biomarkers for diagnosis and therapy for oral and nasopharyngeal cancer

Oral cancer is rare but getting more common, and most of these cancers occur among Asians. The biggest problem is that there is not enough money or research done on oral cancer and in Malaysia, half of these patients die within the first 2 years. CARIF’s research in oral cancer development has helped scientists better understand how normal cells become cancerous, especially in Asians. We know that cancers in the different anatomical location may be different genetically and this may explain why some patients respond to treatment and others do not. CARIF’s research in the genes in oral cancer could help match cancer patients to the right treatments.

The biggest challenge in treating cancer is that the drugs that kill cancer cells also kill normal cells. We know that the immune system protects us from many diseases including cancers, but most cancers have evolved ways of deceiving the immune system that they are harmless. In collaboration with researchers in Universiti Malaya, Ministry of Health and the USA, CARIF researchers are finding new ways to undo this block and train the immune system to fight cancer.

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Patron: YM Tunku Tan Sri Dato’ Seri Ahmad Yahaya

Trustees: YABhg Toh Puan Dato’ Seri Dr Aishah Ong (Chairman), YTM Tengku Datuk Seri Ahmad Shah Al-Haj ibni Almarhum Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Al-Haj, Encik Alan Hamzah Sendut, Ms Lim Siew Lian, Encik Abdul Hamid Ibrahim, Tan Sri Dato’ Gan TL, Dato’ Anne Eu

CARIF researchers have won a number of prestigious awards including 2 L’Oreal Women in Science Awards and numerous UICC Awards. We have registered three patents on new treatments for oral and nasopharyngeal cancer and hope to conduct human clinical trials with these new therapies in the coming years.

Maximizing Malaysia’s rich biodiversity in search for anti-cancer research compounds

Even though many cancer drugs have been developed, there are still many cancers for which there is no cure. CARIF researchers hope to find better drugs with fewer side effects, and to find new cures for cancers that not yet have a cure.

Embedded within the variety of flora and fauna in Malaysia are chemical diversity that may be developed into clinically useful drugs. Realizing this potential, CARIF has tapped into our country’s natural resource, researching the use of more than 5,000 species of plants, mushroom, seaweed, swamps, streams and oceans, for anti-cancer compounds.

CARIF researchers have identified numerous anti-cancer compounds and are testing 3 of the most promising compounds in animals. CARIF has filed one patent on one of these compounds for the treatment of cancer.

Hope Lives Here

This year, CARIF commemorates its 10th year anniversary with a simple, yet powerful theme: “Hope Lives Here”. The theme encapsulates CARIF’s belief that the answer for cancer prevention and treatment lies in our very own population, in our very own genes, in our health habits and in Malaysia’s own biodiversity.

In offering his congratulations to CARIF, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said, “CARIF has achieved significant progress in the field of cancer research in these 10 years. It is well on its way to achieving its vision of being a national leader in cancer treatment and research. I look forward with great anticipation to all that CARIF will accomplish in the decade ahead.”

The evening’s festivities began with a cocktail-cum-art exhibition that showcased more than 40 pieces of artwork related to cancer. Among the artworks that were featured in the showcase included paintings from Kong Yink Heay, a cancer research scientist. Her career in cancer research has allowed her to make close observation of cells under the microscope. The fascinating beauty of these cells inspired her to portray the scientific mechanisms of the cells in her paintings. By combining science and art, she hopes to educate the public about science and to raise awareness on the importance of scientific research.

A painting that took centre stage at the exhibition was “Trinity”. Contributed by breast cancer survivor and abstract artist Jasmine Raj, the painting depicts values of faith, hope, and love through the use of bold, fire tones. The orange and red tones reflect the inner strength that carries us through the trials of our lives while the yellow and gold hues are a reference to the Divine lighting up our paths with hope for the things dreamed in our lives, faith in our ability to achieve excellence in all we do with God’s guidance and love that conquers all.

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Jasmine Raj is a Malaysian-based artist who has exhibited paintings nationally. She credits her late mother Jaclyn Raj as a strong influence for her passion in art. Her background in art started with a stint in folk art in 1999 followed by working with her mentor, Karl-heinz Mesbach, an American painter who taught her shading techniques which then led her to pursue painting using canvas. Her battle with breast cancer is the driving force that led to a career in painting for charity.

Aside from paintings, the art exhibition also showcased special glass art pieces by Zulkifli Hamzah, a graduate from the Bartlett School of Architecture and an executive director of Brunnsfield. Zulkifli produced a series of glass art which were inspired by the strength of cancer patients and their battle against cancer.

The art exhibition also featured photographs depicting cancer cells by Steve Gschmeissner, a retired scientist from Bedford in the UK and one of the most prolific scientific photographers in the world. A multi-award winning photographer, he works with Scanning Electron microscopes to magnify his subjects by up to a million times to provide users with a unique view of his subjects.

World-class pianist, Bobby Chen provided the main entertainment for the night and enthralled guests with a masterful and enchanting performance that featured a repertoire of classical greats. The dinner was also accompanied by performances by Malaysian-based acapella group, The SnL Singers with their off-the-edge brand of contemporary, pop, jazz and swing stylings.

Tun Mahathir also presented special recognition awards to the top six donors of CARIF, Yayasan Sime Darby and the Sime Darby Group of Companies, PETRONAS, Yayasan Lim, Lembaga Totalisator and the Selangor Turf Club, Joseph Eu Foundation and Eu Yan Sang, and Yayasan Al-Bukhary who have enabled CARIF to conduct research in prevention, early detection and treatment for cancers.

The donor representatives were:

1. YABhg Tun Musa Hitam, Chairman of the Board of Directors and Yayasan Sime Darby
2. YABhg To' Puan Noranee, the widow of the late Tun Azizan Zainul Abidin the former Chairman of PETRONAS and accompanied by Puan Juniwati of Vice President of Human Resources of PETRONAS.
3. Madam Lim Siew Lian, a Trustee of Yayasan Lim
4. YABhg Tan Sri Richard Cham, Chairman of Selangor Turf Club and Vice President of the Lembaga Totalisator
5. Mr Richard Eu, Group Chief Executive of Eu Yan Sang
6. YBhg Datuk Seri Ismail Yusof, the Vice President of Yayasan Al-Bukhary

The evening concluded with an emotionally charged video testimonial from celebrities, scientists, cancer carers and cancer survivors whose lives had been touched by cancer, including Tan Sri Francis Yeoh, Datin Seri Tiara Jacquelina, YM Professor Dato Dr Tunku Sara, and Datuk Nancy Yeoh.

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With the theme, "Hope Lives Here", they appealed for the public to have more awareness towards cancer research as it is a significant partner in Malaysia's progress in finding a cure for cancer. They also urged the public to join in and support CARIF's hope for a future free of the fear of cancer.

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About Sime Darby Berhad

Sime Darby has been a core donor and supporter of CARIF since its inception in 2000. Sime Darby is committed to its Corporate Social Responsibility programme and has supported CARIF through the provision of core laboratory facilities for CARIF. From 2007 - 2011, Sime Darby has been the largest donor, committing RM 2 million per year for Malaysian cancer research. In addition, Yayasan Sime Darby (YSD) is committed towards raising funds and awareness of breast cancer research through the Sime Darby Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) tournament at the Kuala Lumpur Golf & Country Club (KLGCC).

About PETRONAS

PETRONAS is proud to be associated with the Cancer Research Initiatives Foundation (CARIF) as one of its long-term anchor donors. PETRONAS' contribution to CARIF since 2000 has facilitated the establishment of the CARIF laboratories in two state-of-the-art facilities in Subang Jaya. PETRONAS, which focuses on research and development as one of its key drivers for growth, understands CARIF's need for support for its R&D efforts. It hopes its association with CARIF would continuously contribute towards the progress in cancer research efforts in Malaysia.

About Yayasan Lim/Resort World Berhad

Yayasan Lim is a founding donor of CARIF. The family foundation was first established by the late Lim Goh Tong, the founder of Genting Group, in 1978. Yayasan Lim provided RM1 million per year for the first 4 years of CARIF's operations.

About Lembaga Totalisator Malaysia

Lembaga Totalisator Malaysia is a founding donor of CARIF, providing RM2 million to establish the CARIF laboratory in 2000. A statutory board under the Ministry of Finance, Malaysia, Lembaga Totalisator Malaysia was established following the enactment of The Racing (Totalisator Board) Act in 1961. The totalisator operation was privatized and licensed to Pan Malaysian Pools Sdn Bhd, recently acquired by Jana Pendidikan Malaysia Sdn Bhd, a wholly-owned unit of Genting Berhad.

About Bobby Chen

Malaysian-born pianist, Bobby Chen is a graduate of the Yehudi Menuhin School and the Royal Academy of Music with Hamish Milne and Ruth Nye. Chen has performed as a soloist under conductors Mathias Bamert, Maximiliano Valdes, Lan Shui, Sir Neville Marriner, Lord Menuhin, Pierre-Andre Valade and concerti with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, London Sinfonietta, Warsaw Sinfonia, Singapore Symphony Orchestra and Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra.

Among the highlights of his career included a world premiere of a new piano concerto in London to celebrate Malaysia's 50th anniversary as a sovereign nation in 2007, when he represented Malaysia in

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The Rising Stars Showcase Performances for the 27th Annual Federation of Asian Cultural Promotion (FACP) conference in 2009 and when he was awarded 'The BrandLaureate – Country Branding Award' from The Asia Pacific Brands Foundation in March 2011.

About The SnL Singers

The SnL Singers are an *a cappella* ensemble with a contemporary, pop, jazz and swing repertoire. The group has performed widely in the local and international art scene, including in concert halls in Australia, England and Singapore, and are members of various performing arts groups and choirs in Malaysia.

The SnL Singers gave its first public performance at the Wei-Ling Gallery in Kuala Lumpur in September 2005, followed by a performance before Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the *Women of the Year Awards* in November 2005, and has since performed at numerous corporate events, product launches, weddings and private functions.

About Cancer Research Malaysia

Cancer Research Malaysia (formerly known as Cancer Research Initiatives Foundation) is the first independent cancer research organization in Malaysia. Cancer Research Malaysia conducts research to identify better ways to prevent, detect and cure cancer for Malaysians. Cancer Research Malaysia is committed to ensuring that at least 90% of funds received are spent on research. Cancer Research Malaysia researchers work closely with experts worldwide to fight cancers that occur in Asia as well as globally.

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